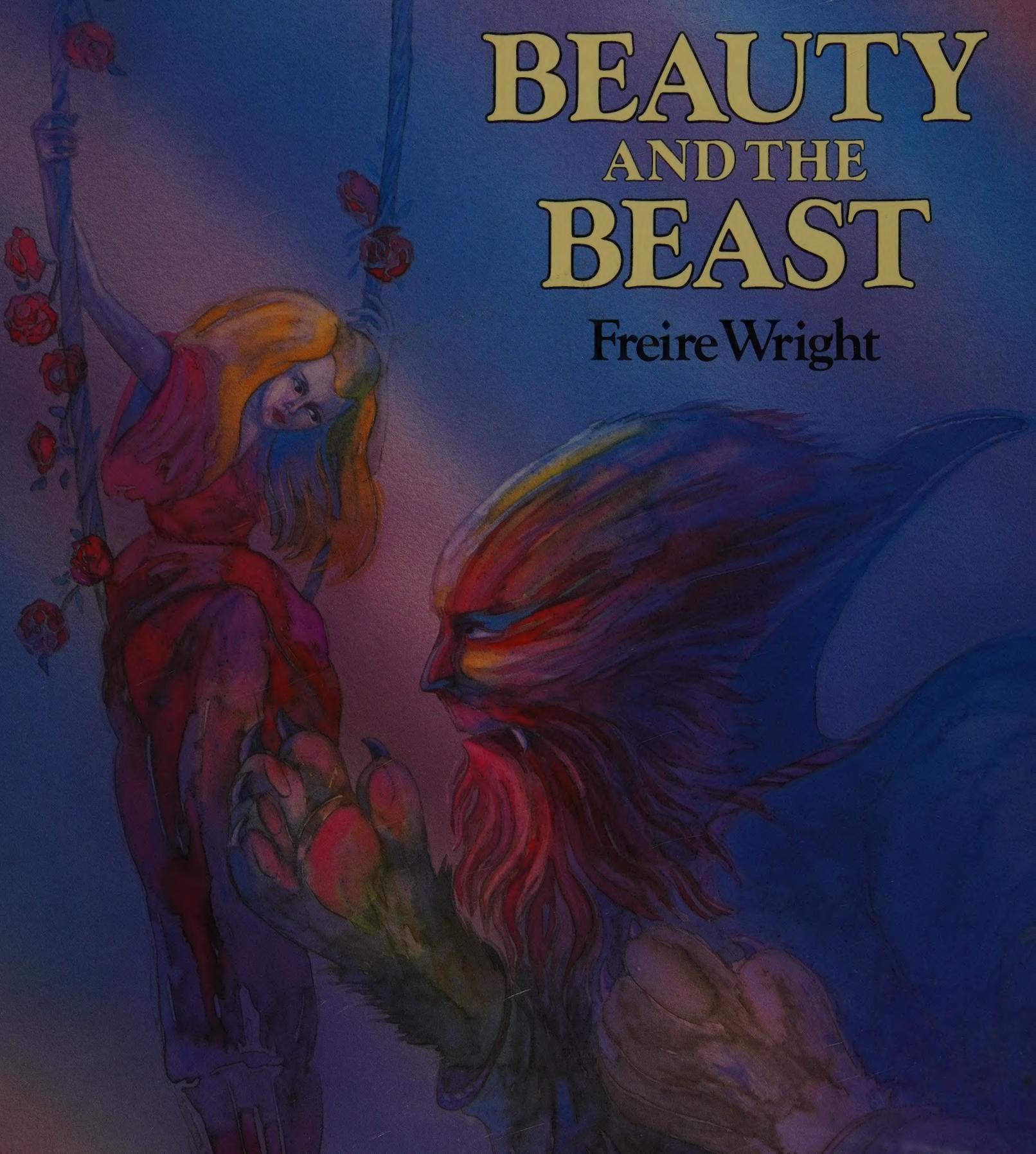


BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

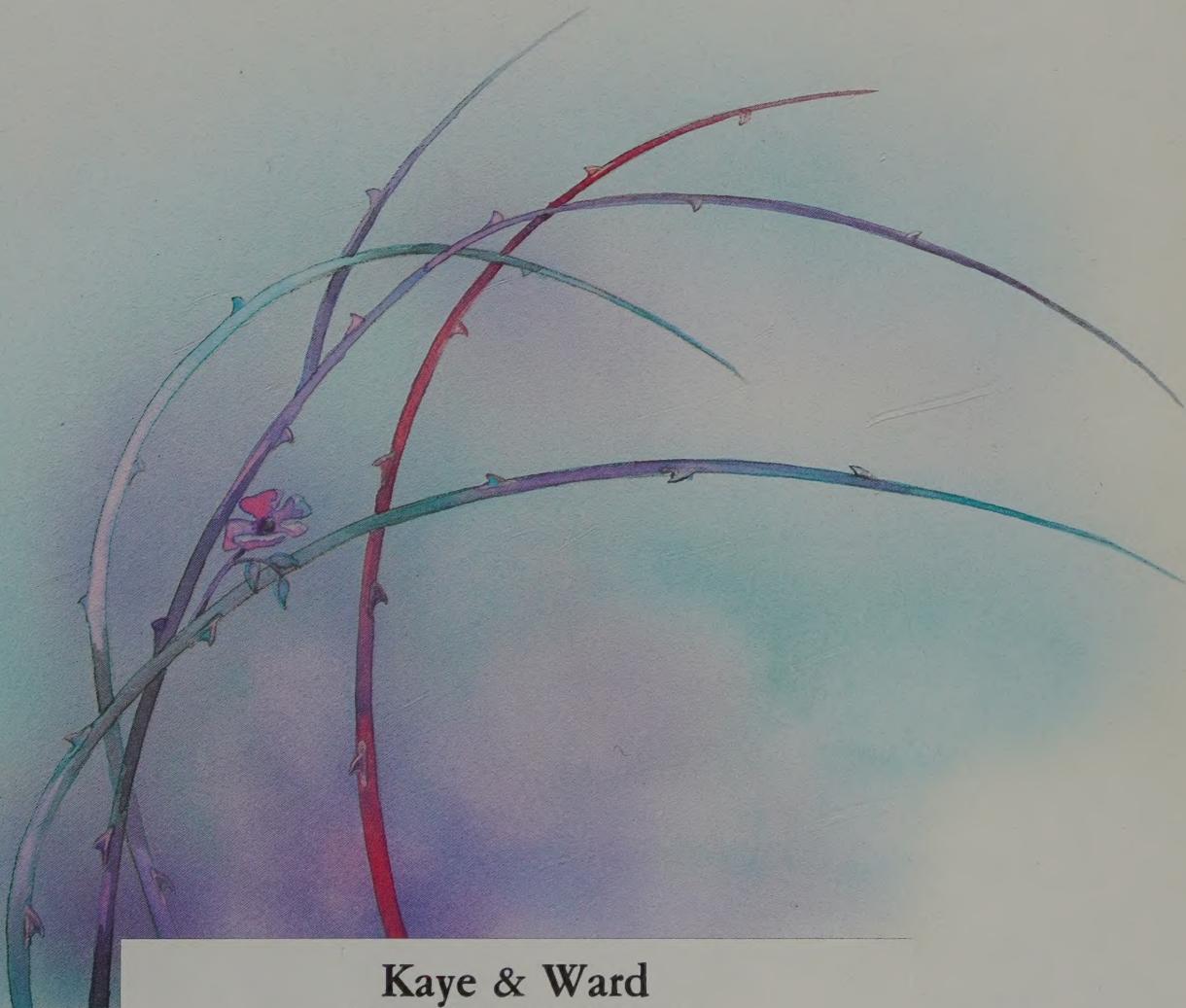
Freire Wright



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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Freire Wright



Kaye & Ward

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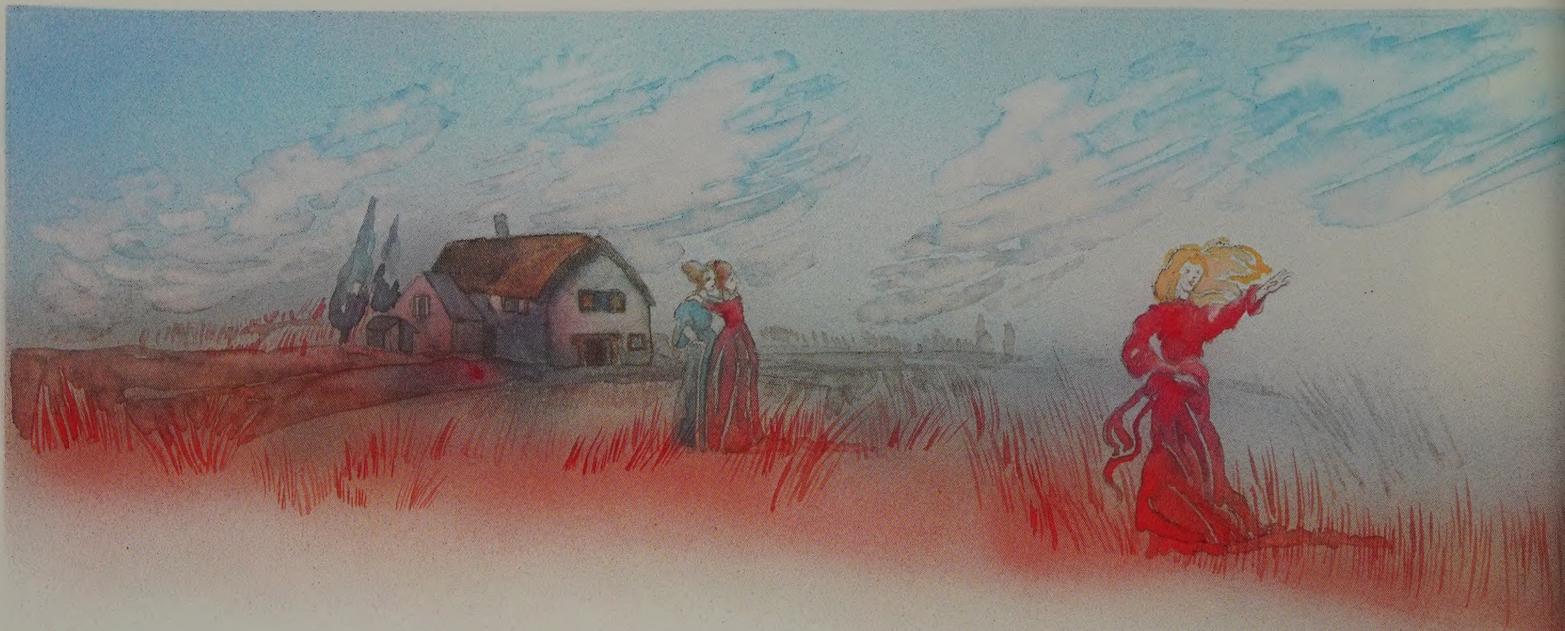


Once there lived an exceedingly rich merchant who had three daughters. All were pretty, but the youngest was especially so. When small, she was known as 'the little beauty' and as she grew older this name stayed with her and caused much jealousy on the part of her sisters, who were arrogant and spoilt, pretending to be great ladies, going to balls in their fine dresses and glittering jewels.

Then quite suddenly the merchant lost his fortune. With tears he told his daughters they must move to a cottage in the forest and live a simple country life.

The two elder girls thought their many admirers would want to marry them, but now they were poor no one would look at them. But everyone was sorry for Beauty. "Such a dear, gentle, considerate girl," they all said. Several young men were willing to marry her, but she turned them down, saying that her father would need her more than ever now.





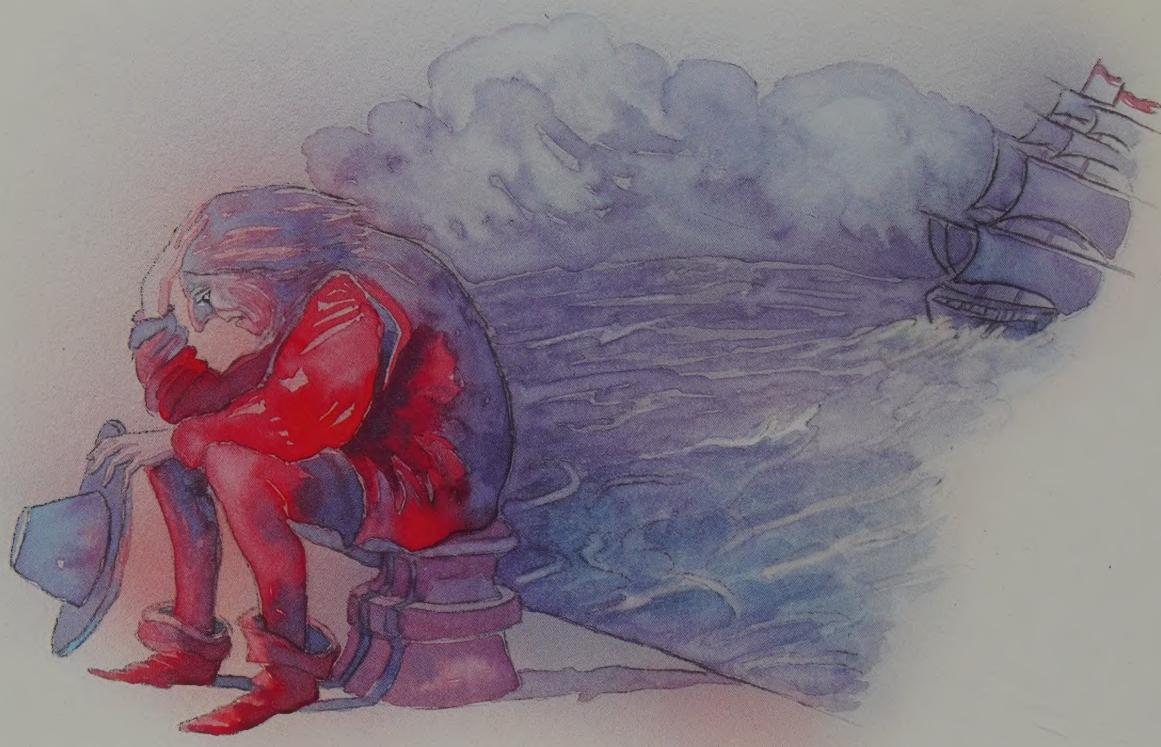
The merchant and his daughters moved into the cottage, and it was bleak and cold. But Beauty rose early each day to light the fire, and clean and tidy and cook. When she had time to spare she would read or play her harpsichord.

Her sisters on the other hand were idle creatures, rising late and grumbling from noon until nightfall.

After a year had passed the merchant received a letter saying one of his ships, feared lost, had reached port safely with its cargo. The two eldest daughters were overjoyed and begged their father to go at once to claim his fortune, and to buy them dresses, furs and finery. But Beauty asked only for a rose, just one single bloom.

The merchant was in good spirits as he rode away.





But when he reached the city there was a law suit over his merchandise and he returned poorer than ever. He only had to pass through a large wood to reach home when he began to feel cold and tired. The wind was icy and as it grew dark, snow began to fall. The merchant knew he must find shelter or he would perish. Suddenly, through the trees he saw a light and he made haste towards it.



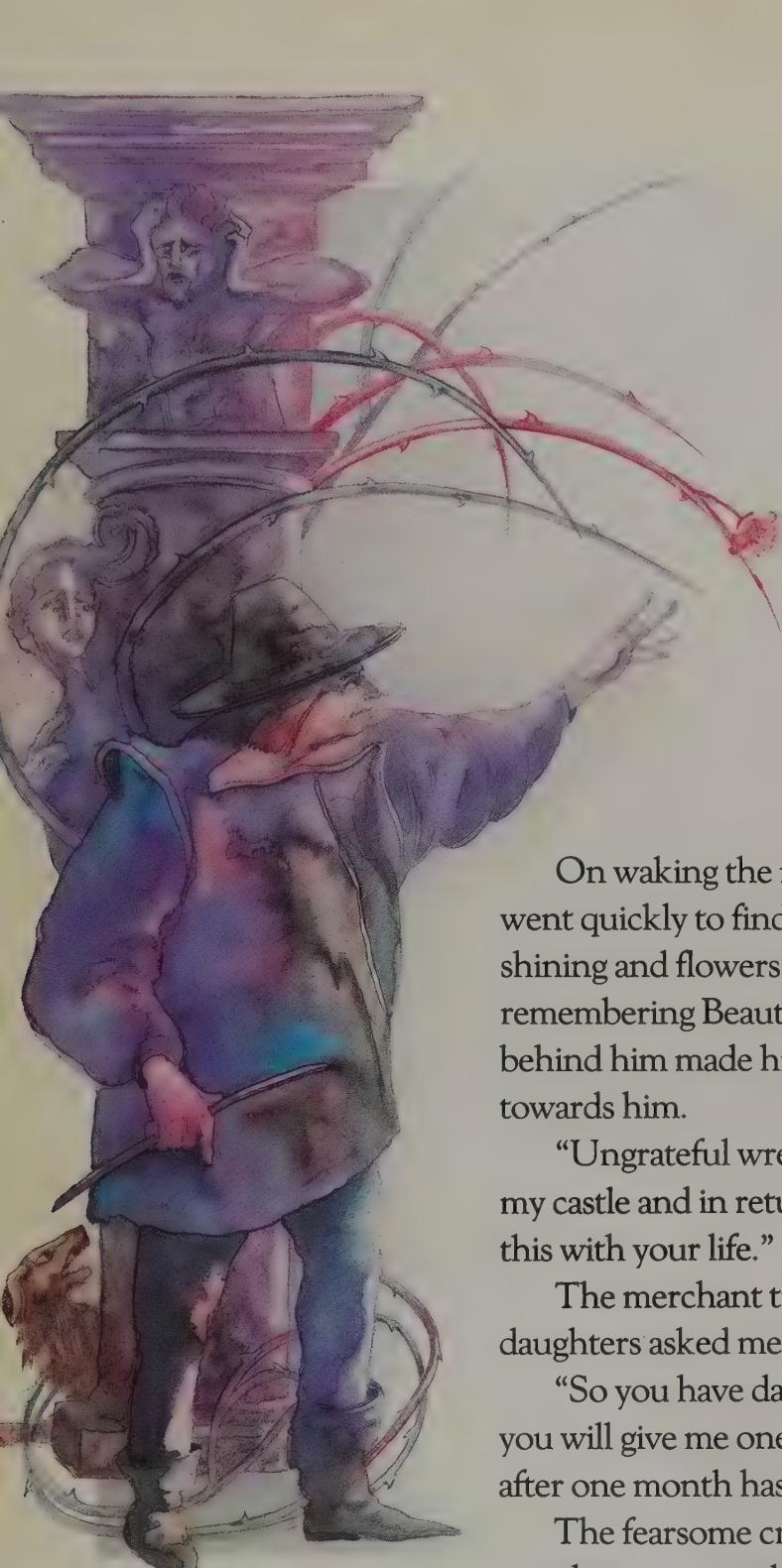


He discovered it came from a large castle. He passed through the gateway and to his surprise there was no one about.

He led his horse to the stables, entered the castle by the huge oak door and found himself in a great hall with a blazing fire, a table laden with food and a place set for one.



He drew near the warmth of the fire and waited for someone to appear. When the clock struck eleven and he was still alone, he could resist the temptation of the food no longer and he helped himself to the succulent meat and drank several glasses of wine. Then he decided to explore. He went through a number of magnificently furnished rooms until he found a room with a good bed and here he fell asleep.



On waking the next morning, anxious to reach home, the merchant went quickly to find his horse. The snow had vanished, the sun was shining and flowers blossomed everywhere. He passed a rose bush and, remembering Beauty's request, plucked one rose to take to her. A noise behind him made him start and he turned to see a hideous beast coming towards him.

"Ungrateful wretch," it roared. "I saved your life by receiving you into my castle and in return you steal that which I love best. You shall pay for this with your life."

The merchant trembled. "I beg your forgiveness," he cried. "One of my daughters asked me to bring her a rose . . ."

"So you have daughters," said the Beast. "I am willing to set you free if you will give me one of your daughters. She must come willingly and if after one month has passed there is no sign of her, you shall die."

The fearsome creature disappeared into the undergrowth and the merchant mounted his horse and rode swiftly away.





The merchant wanted to see his daughters again, and as he had no intention of sacrificing any one of them, he planned to return to the Beast. When he reached the cottage he greeted his daughters with great sadness. He gave Beauty the rose and told her of the bargain he had made with the terrible beast.

“You shall not die, father,” said Beauty. “Since the monster agrees to accept a daughter instead, I intend to offer myself to appease his fury.”

But her father would not hear of it. “I am old,” he replied. “I would rather be devoured than die of the grief which your loss would cause me.”





But Beauty was determined to have her way. She divided all her possessions between her sisters and they pretended to be upset, though they were really far too interested in plans for their own marriages to grieve over the loss of their young sister. The morning of departure came and Beauty and her father mounted their horses and journeyed to the castle.

By evening they had arrived. When they entered the great hall they found the table was magnificently laid for two people.

The merchant had no appetite, but Beauty sat down and served the food. Since the Beast had provided such splendid fare she thought he must be anxious to fatten her up before eating her.







When they had finished their meal they heard a terrible noise and Beauty trembled when the hideous Beast appeared.

“So you are Beauty. Are you prepared to stay with me in this great castle of your own free will?”

Although she was terrified, she concealed her fear, and boldly answered, “Yes.”

“Then you are indeed kind as well as beautiful,” said the Beast. And turning to her father he said, “And I thank you for your honesty, Sir. Tomorrow you will leave my house, never to return.”

“Let me stay,” begged the distraught merchant.

“No father. You must go tomorrow morning,” Beauty insisted.

The next morning Beauty sat and waited, convinced that the Beast would soon devour her. As there was no sign of him, at length she decided to explore the castle, the splendour of which she could not but admire.

Upon one door were the words "Beauty's Room" and when she looked inside she was dazzled by its magnificence. A library of books lined the walls and she took one from the shelf. She opened it and there written in gold was the message:

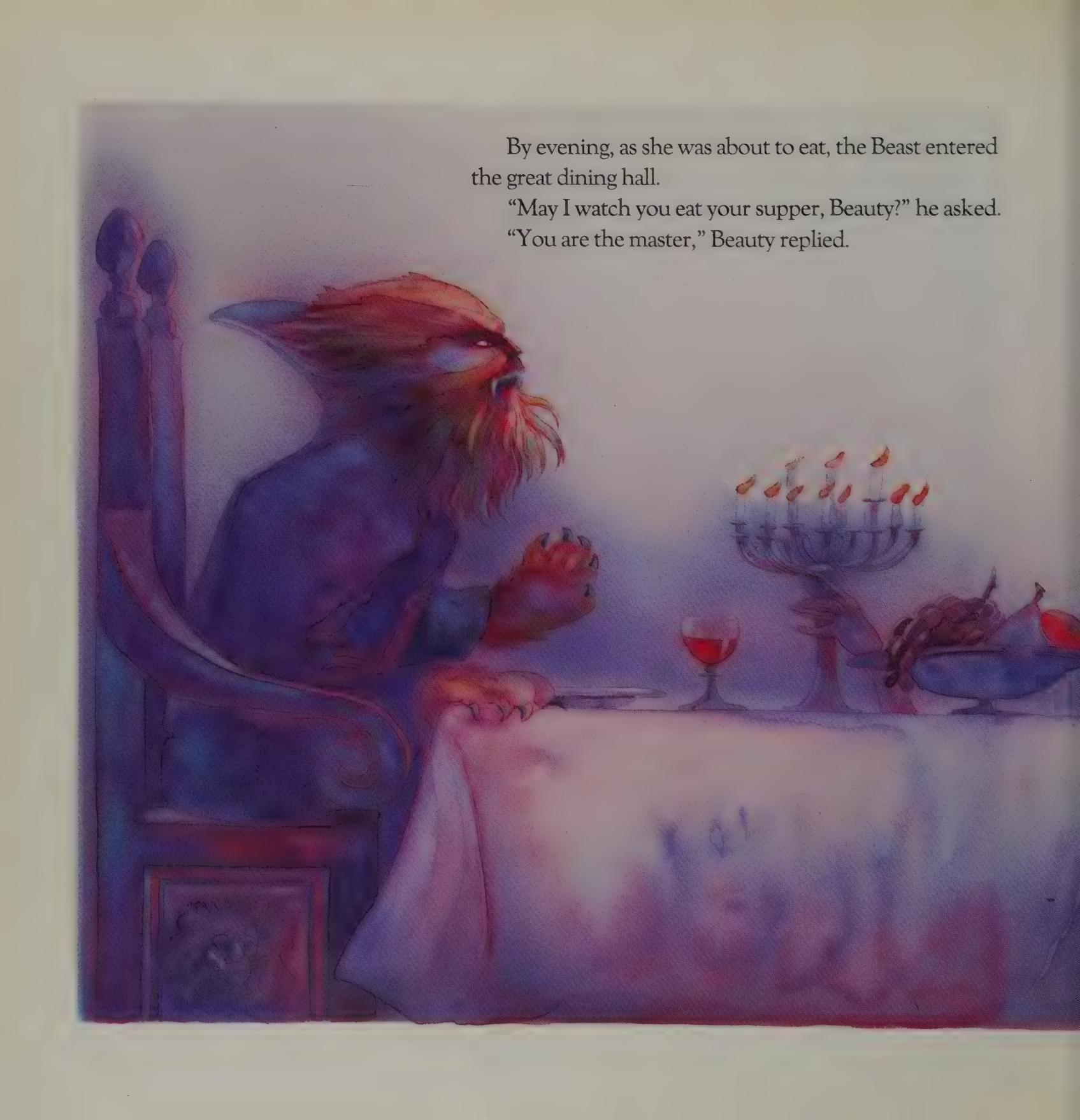
"Ask for anything you wish,
You are mistress of all you see."



"My only wish is to know my poor father is well," she sighed.

Imagine her astonishment when she saw, reflected in the mirror, her father riding through the forest. The vision faded and Beauty began to think the Beast must after all be kind and she had nothing to fear.



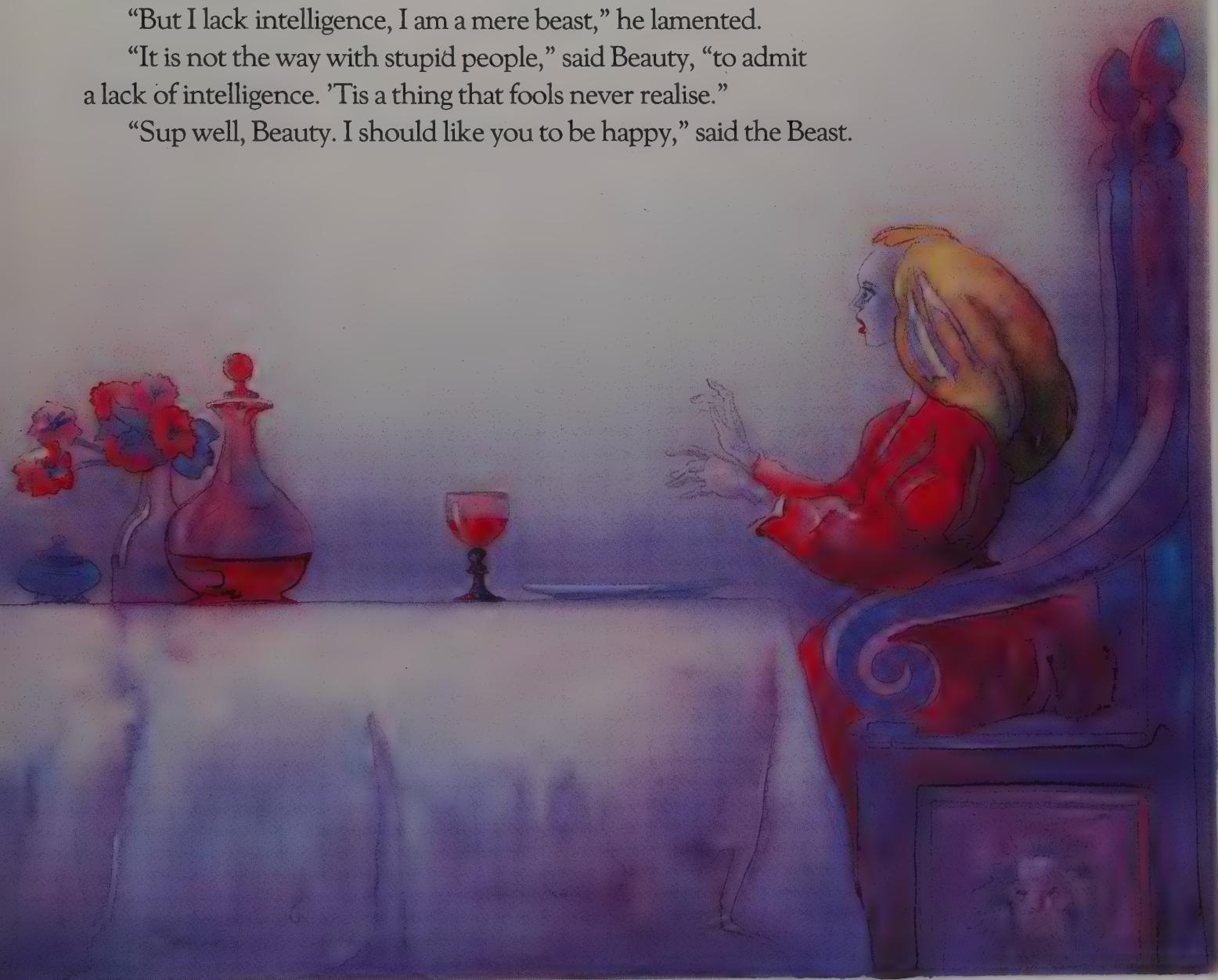
A dark, atmospheric illustration of a Beast in a dining hall. The Beast, with a large, scaly, reddish-brown body, a long, spiky tail, and a mane of dark hair, is seated at a table. He is looking towards the right side of the frame. The table is set with a large, ornate candelabra holding many lit candles, a glass of red wine, and a bowl of fruit. The lighting is low, with the glow of the candles illuminating the Beast's face and the surrounding area.

By evening, as she was about to eat, the Beast entered the great dining hall.

“May I watch you eat your supper, Beauty?” he asked.
“You are the master,” Beauty replied.

"Am I very ugly, Beauty? Tell me truthfully," he begged.
"Since I must speak the truth, you are indeed ugly,
but you are also kind."

"But I lack intelligence, I am a mere beast," he lamented.
"It is not the way with stupid people," said Beauty, "to admit
a lack of intelligence. 'Tis a thing that fools never realise."
"Sup well, Beauty. I should like you to be happy," said the Beast.



“You have a kind heart,” she replied, “and when I think of that, you no longer seem ugly.”

But she nearly died of fright when the Beast asked: “Beauty, will you marry me?”

“No Beast,” she hastily replied, and when she looked up he had left the room.

Months passed and every day Beauty was made aware of fresh kindness on the part of the Beast. But although he asked her many times to marry him, each time she refused.

One evening, in the garden, he poured his heart out to her. “Beauty, I love you so. Promise you will never leave me.”

“I would willingly make such a promise,” she replied, “but I have a longing to see my father again and I feel I shall die if you refuse my request.”

“Then you shall return to your father and your Beast will die of sorrow instead,” lamented the Beast.

“No, I will not leave you,” said Beauty. “Just let me spend one week with my father and on the eighth day I shall return.”

“You shall be with him tomorrow, but I beg you not to forget me. When you want to return just take off your ring and put it on the table.” And with that the Beast departed.





When Beauty woke the next day, she was at home again. Her father was overjoyed to see her. Her sisters were now married, and they came at once to visit her. They were exceedingly jealous when they saw Beauty was so enchantingly dressed, looking like a princess, and they were filled with envy when she told them how happy she was.

When they were alone they planned their revenge. They would keep her at home longer than a week, and then the Beast would fly into a rage and seek her out and devour her.

So they made a great fuss of Beauty and when a week had passed they wept at the thought of her departure and begged her to stay. Beauty agreed, but that night she dreamt the Beast was dying. She awoke greatly distressed.



“I am indeed very wicked to cause so much grief to a beast who has shown me nothing but kindness,” she thought. “Why did I not marry him?” And she placed her ring on the table.



Immediately she found herself in the Beast's castle again. Recalling her dream, she began to search for some sign of him, but she could find him nowhere. She rushed out into the garden and saw him lying on the ground unconscious. She listened for his heartbeat and rejoiced that he was still alive and then she fetched some water to revive him.



After a while the Beast opened his eyes. "Beauty, is it really you?" he cried. "Because you forgot your promise, I resolved to die. I could not bear the grief of losing you."

"Dear Beast," she said, "I have missed you so. I dreamt your life was in danger and I returned at once. If you still want me for your wife I will marry you."





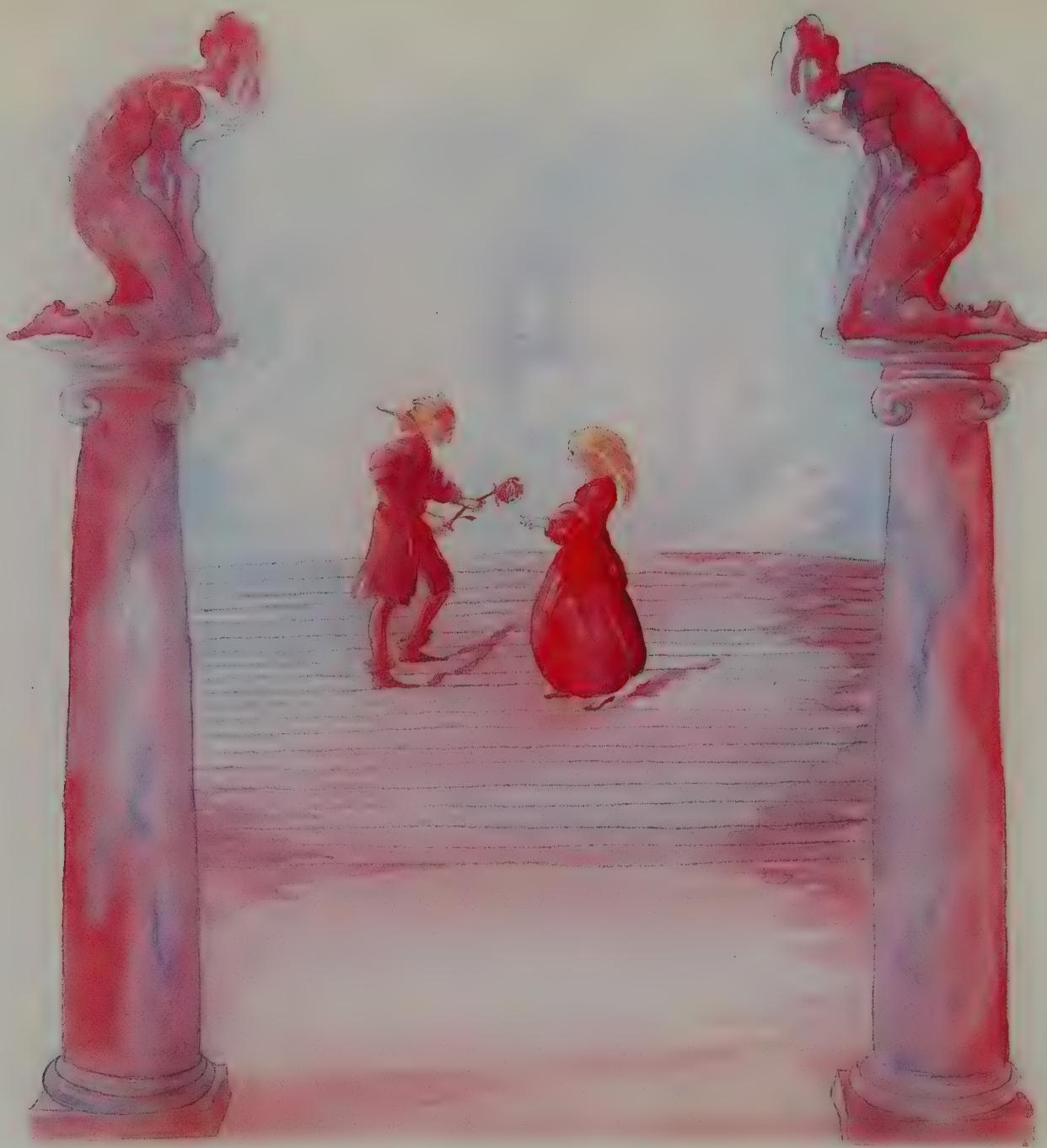


Beauty had scarce uttered these words when the palace came alive with flickering lights, fireworks and sweet music. Beside her, where the Beast had lain, stood a prince more beautiful than love itself.

Many years ago a wicked fairy had cast a spell on him, which could only be broken by the promise of marriage.

Together with her Beast-prince, Beauty returned to the castle and found her father and sisters and a host of people waiting to celebrate their marriage.





“Beauty,” said the prince, “your destiny is to become a great queen, but as for your sisters they shall be turned to statues to stand for ever at the castle door to witness your happiness.”



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